



National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Harpers Ferry National  
Historical Park

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## Harpers Ferry NHP News Release

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### Protecting Historic Harpers Ferry Landscapes: Historians Speak

Noted author and historian James I. Robertson, Jr. has been the recipient of every major award given in the field of Civil War history and is an Alumni Distinguished Professor at Virginia Tech, one of eight selected from the university's 2,200 faculty members. He's the author of the award-winning books *General A.P. Hill*; *Soldiers Blue and Gray*; *Civil War! America Becomes One Nation*; and the 950-page biography, *Stonewall Jackson: The Man, The Soldier, The Legend*, which won an unprecedented eight national awards, and teaches the largest Civil War history class in American higher education—with approximately 250 students enrolled each semester. He is also concerned about the preservation of Civil War Battlefields. According to Robertson, "the most important thing the overwhelming majority of Americans enjoy in common is our history. Thank God, this is so; for a nation that forgets its past—as history tells us repeatedly—has little hope for the future. Historic sites, such as Harpers Ferry, provide scene and sound no book can capture. We must preserve these areas. The America of tomorrow depends on it."

Half-way across the country, Dr. Edward Linenthal, editor of the *Journal of American History* and professor of history at Indiana University, has also spoken out about the protection of this landscape. Dr. Linenthal has been called "a biographer of memorial processes" and has published books on the creation of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum and the processes of veneration, defilement and redefinition at battlefields in his book, *Sacred Ground: Americans and Their Battlefields*. His most recent book is *The Unfinished Bombing: Oklahoma City in American Memory*.

Dr Linenthal says, "I remember very well my first visit to Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, how the cultural and natural environment created a haunting historic landscape. We must treasure these sites! Once they are compromised, they will never be the same. If we care about our past, if we want our children and grandchildren to walk these sites with us and after we are gone, if we want historic places to nourish their imaginations and their thirst for history, we must preserve these places. Commercial development is a blight on too much of our nation. Let us join together to protect for future generations our historic sites."

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The National Park Service cares for special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.

During a visit to Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, Pulitzer prize winning author Dr. James McPherson, Professor Emeritus, George Henry David '86 Professor of History at Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey, said, "I've taken many groups to Civil War battlefields and not only found it important to have the terrain preserved in order for them to understand what happened there, but there is a kind of empathy, a kind of bonding that goes on when people actually visit a place where something important, something terrible, but something also great happened--a bonding between past and present, between those who've gone before and the realization that their sacrifices, their hardships, and their achievements made this country what it is today. If we lose that, then we've lost an essential part of our being."